



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

David Price (D-NC), Chairman, Subcommittee on Homeland Security

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY (Approx. 10:10 AM)
Tuesday, March 23, 2010

Media Contact: Andrew High
202-225-1784

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DAVID PRICE

***DHS Air and Marine Operations and Investments: Customs and Border Protection and Coast Guard
March, 23, 2010 / 10:00 am***

This morning we will be examining the respective roles and the coordination between the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in carrying out their air and marine missions. If one thinks of the Department of Homeland Security as a police force, the Coast Guard and CBP walk the same beat, watching for smugglers and working to thwart their efforts. Their aircraft and vessels patrol our borders and coasts, and interdict migrants and illegal drugs. Their illustrious histories originate in the first Acts of the U.S. Congress to collect revenue, counter smuggling, and protect life and property at sea and along the coasts. And their range is vast – 7,500 miles of land border and 95,000 miles of coastline.

This hearing is the first opportunity for this Subcommittee to examine how these essential programs work together to support a wide range of law enforcement, national security, and humanitarian missions. We welcome Admiral Vince Atkins, Assistant Commandant for Capability for the U.S. Coast Guard, and Michael Kostelnik, Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Air and Marine, U.S. Customs and Border Protection for a frank discussion on this topic.

Admiral Atkins is a leading member of the DHS Senior Guidance Team on matters related to the Department's maritime, air and surface capabilities, and is the Coast Guard's lead executive for the Predator B partnership -- one area of focus for today's hearing. Before his current assignment, Admiral Atkins served as Deputy Director of Response Policy, overseeing development of policy guidance for the Coast Guard's statutory missions and helping frame the foundation for cross-agency partnerships we will examine today.

Assistant Commissioner Kostelnik directs the world's largest civilian aviation and maritime agency. Before coming to CBP, Commissioner Kostelnik had a distinguished U.S. Air Force career, retiring as a Major

General; he then ran NASA's manned space and international space station programs. Over his 5 years with CBP, he has helped transform Air and Marine into a national enterprise – a long way from its origins as a loose confederation of field operations.

Cooperation between these agencies has been very successful in places like Puerto Rico, where shared resources have slowed undocumented immigration through the Mona Pass and intercepted illegal drugs headed for American shores. On the drug front, their joint efforts are combined with DOD and DEA under the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force – South, which coordinates efforts in the Western Hemisphere to detect, monitor, and interdict drug smuggling by sea and air.

Both agencies have long conducted aerial surveillance along our coasts. The Coast Guard has its C-130 and C-144 aircraft, and CBP has its P-3 and Dash-8. All are used to identify and track smugglers moving drugs from South America to the Caribbean and Gulf Coast. Both agencies operate helicopters for interdiction, law enforcement support, and humanitarian assistance.

CBP and the Coast Guard are jointly developing a maritime variant of the Predator B unmanned aircraft system to extend their surveillance abilities. This maritime variant, named the Guardian, was first flown in 2008 and is undergoing additional operational testing; another is requested in CBP's FY 2011 budget. The Guardian represents a new level of collaboration on this critical mission, and we look forward to learning more details about this program today.

Coordination between these two agencies also extends to managing and sharing assets. Over the past two years, Coast Guard has transferred 73 small vessels, including 55 SAFE boats, to CBP for refurbishment and marine deployment. Both agencies participate in DHS councils to review aircraft and vessel procurement planning and decisions, and have benefited from access to each other's contracts. In light of such cooperation, we hope to hear today how the two agencies manage their overlapping jurisdictions, coordinate their missions, and share intelligence.

Despite such positive elements, we have concerns about sustainability of these programs. First, a lack of trained operators and support staff could reduce DHS capacity to carry out aerial surveillance missions. For

example, the request cuts 120 CBP pilots and other positions funded last year to support the UAS program.

This seems inconsistent with plans to deploy the Predator.

In addition, while both Coast Guard and CBP are acquiring new marine and air assets, they are burdened with aging fleets, which are increasingly expensive and dangerous to operate. The need for Coast Guard recapitalization is well known, and CBP's air assets are over 33 years old on average. We expect to explore today whether CBP can sustain its operating tempo while delaying replacements, as anticipated in its budget. Turning an eye toward the long-term situation of these assets, this Subcommittee needs updated – and overdue – strategic recapitalization plans for CBP and Coast Guard. I'm starting to sound like a broken record on this issue, but without this information, we cannot assess how the Department will modernize these aging fleets and, therefore, put our 2011 budget decisions in perspective.

Admiral Atkins and Commissioner Kostelnik, we anticipate an informative discussion today. Your full written statements will be placed in the record, so I ask you each to limit your remarks to a five minute presentation. Before we begin, let me recognize the distinguished Ranking Member, Hal Rogers, for his comments.

#